

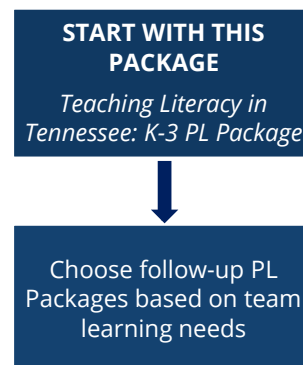
Unit Starter Professional Learning Package

Description of Professional Learning Packages

Professional Learning Packages (PL Packages) are professional development tools designed to deepen educators' understanding of key topics related to literacy instruction. PL Packages are based around Tennessee's professional learning standards and are intended as an off-the-shelf collaborative learning resource that districts can use flexibly based on their unique student and teacher needs.

Each PL Package is composed of a series of connected **learning sessions**. Learning sessions are action-oriented, with tangible outputs teachers can use in classrooms right away. Learning sessions are designed to take 45-60 minutes.

The *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee* PL Package provides an essential foundation that all other PL Packages build upon, so it should be completed first before beginning any other PL Packages.



Unit Starter Professional Learning Package Overview

The purpose of the Unit Starter PL Package is to prepare educators to teach with Unit Starters effectively. It walks educators through each component of the Unit Starter and provides resources to help teachers understand the goals of the Unit Starter they plan to teach. The PL Package is organized into two modules:

- Module 1: Preparing to Teach with Unit Starters
- Module 2: Refining Instruction with Unit Starters

The first module is designed to be completed prior to teaching with the Unit Starters and focuses on preparing teachers for instruction. The second module is designed to be completed after teaching with the Unit Starter and supports teachers in reflecting on and refining their instructional practices.

The guiding questions for the first module in this PL Package are:

- What is a Unit Starter?
- Why teach with Unit Starters?
- What resources are included in the Unit Starter?

- How do Unit Starters support standards-based instruction?
- How are concepts and understandings organized in the Unit Starter?
- How are concepts and understandings supported by the Unit Starter's texts, tasks, and question sequences?
- How can I prepare to teach with the Unit Starter?

The guiding questions for the second module in this PL Package are:

- What growth did students make as a result of engagement with the Unit Starters?
- What growth did I make as a teacher as a result of engagement with the Unit Starters?
- How can I refine my instruction moving forward?

What are unit starters?

Unit starters are instructional materials designed to support professional learning and planning for English language arts instruction in kindergarten through third grade classrooms. They include a set of appropriately complex texts for interactive read aloud and shared reading experiences, daily tasks, question sequences, and an end-of-unit task. All components of the unit starter are designed to develop literacy skills and understandings and build knowledge of concepts related to grade-level science and social studies standards.

Unit starters are **not**:

- designed to provide comprehensive instructional materials for all essential components of the literacy block;
- intended to replace time spent in explicit and systematic foundational skills instruction; nor
- intended to replace science or social studies instruction.

Unit starters instead provide a base for strong literacy unit planning. In addition to thoughtful preparation using these resources, there are other critical components of the literacy block for which educators will need to plan and prepare (e.g., foundational skill instruction, modeled and interactive writing).

Why teach with unit starters?

Unit starters are designed to support students in reading a high volume of texts and thinking about and responding to them through speaking and writing. Unit starters promote teaching for conceptual understanding by building lessons and tasks around a set of connected concepts. By exploring concepts in depth, students build deep knowledge and comprehensive vocabularies.

What do educators need to engage with this PL Package?

This PL Package builds on key ideas introduced in [Teaching Literacy in Tennessee](#) (TLiT), the department's "how" resource for teaching literacy. Educators looking to complete the unit starter PL Package should be familiar with TLiT and have already completed the *Teaching Literacy in Tennessee* PL Package (found [here](#)).

Educators should select the unit starter they plan to teach prior to the first learning session and have it available, either in hard or soft copy, for easy reference during the sessions. Educators will also need the

corresponding PowerPoint for the module they are completing. There are separate PowerPoints for Module 1 and Module 2.

What are the logistics for this PL Package?

The first module of this PL Package will take approximately seven hours to complete. Module 1 is organized into four separate learning sessions that vary in length. Learning sessions that take longer than an hour to complete are broken up into shorter mini-sessions (e.g., Part A). Module 1 is designed for flexible use; that is, teams of educators can organize the completion of sessions in a range of ways. Examples include:

- Complete all seven hours of Module 1 all in one day.
- Complete the first two learning sessions on one day and the second two learning sessions on another.
- Complete all four learning sessions over a series of eight 45-60-minute mini-sessions.

Module 2 will take approximately two hours to complete. Module 2 is organized into two separate learning sessions that also vary in length. Like Module 1, educator teams can complete Module 2 in a single sitting or spread over multiple days.

Each learning session concludes with a *Learning to Application* activity designed to help educators build deeper understandings related to the learning sessions independently. These activities should be completed in between learning sessions. For educators who do all the learning sessions in one day, it is recommended that they complete the application activities during the sessions as part of their learning.

This PL Package is designed to be completed collaboratively and, ideally, in grade-level teams with teachers who plan to use the same unit starter. One educator will need to serve as the facilitator. A detailed PowerPoint presentation with facilitator notes for each slide is provided.